4: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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mangroves, reeds, and coarse grasses. Then follows the real tropical forest with very fertile soil, consisting on the surface of vegetable humus. In order to penetrate the forest the hunter has to cut his way through the tangled mass of vines and epiphytes with the aid of his machete. 137

North of Rio Patuca the fertile areas are characterized by the existence of extensive "cohune ridges," that is, places dotted with the cohune or corozo palm (*Attalea* sp.). A great number of other palms are found in this region, but only two of them are cultivated and play an important part in the food supply, the coco palm and the pejivalle. Among the other tree forms characteristic of the forest may be mentioned the following: Ceiba (*Ceiba pentandra* Gaertn.), mahogany (*Swietenia macrophylla* King), Spanish or West Indian cedar (*Cedrela* sp.), rosewood, rubber tree (*Castilla* sp.), sapodilla (*Sapota zapotilla*), lignum vitae or guayacán (*Tecoma* sp.), Santa Maria or calaba (*Calophyllum brasiliense* var.), and balsa or corkwood (*Ochroma lagopus*). Epiphytic orchids are especially numerous and rare varieties are also found. The strong withes or *bejucos* on the trees are used in basketry and as a tying material. [285]

From Rio Tinto to Rio Grande the dense forest is at times interrupted by large areas of pine ridges or savannas. These are undulating plains covered with gravel or coarse sand, overgrown with grass, myrtaceae, oaks, nances, small fan palms and long leaf or pitch pines. This pine (*Pinus tenuifolia* Benth.) has its southern limit on the Atlantic side of Nicaragua, a little north of Bluefields Bluff, in latitude 12° 5′ north. Few big trees are to be found in these savannas; there is little underbrush, epiphytes and lianas are scarce, and the whole presents a parklike appearance. On the rich alluvial soil on both sides of the streams traversing the savannas grows a dense and luxuriant vegetation resembling the real forest.

ANIMAL KINGDOM.—Zoologically the Mosquito Coast belongs to South America rather than to North America. In this sparsely inhabited region may be found a great number of species of animal life. The largest mammals are the tapir and the manatee; the latter is still an important animal of food for the Indians, but it is getting rare now. 136

In the jungle are found such beasts of prey as the jaguar, the puma or cougar, and the ocelot; a black variety of the jaguar is occasionally met with. The howling monkey, the spider monkey, and the white-faced or capuchin monkey are found on the tree tops; the two last-named ones are, together with two species of deer and two species of peccary, the most important food animals of the Indians. [224]

Three species of anteaters, many armadillos and opossums, and 2-toed and 3-toed sloths may be met with. Among the rodents may be mentioned the agouti, paca, several species of porcupine, squirrels,

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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recent times this arm has also spread to the Sumu. The Indians use muzzle-loading shotguns, called *raks* or *rakbus* by the Miskito and *arakbus* or *arakbas* by the Sumu. These names are evidently of European origin and are taken from the English "harquebus" or the French "arquebuse," or perhaps the Spanish "arcabuz." Powder is known by its English name (*pówdar*), but shot, which is generally kept in the small *pispis* bottle gourd (*Lagenaria lagenaria*), is spoken of by the Indians as the "eggs of the shotgun" (M.: *raks mabra;* S.: *arakbus suma*). Double-barreled guns (M.: *raks sutki;* S.: *arakbus sutki*, that is, "twin guns") are also occasionally met with.

THE CHASE

SKILL IN HUNTING.—Game is very abundant in this sparsely inhabited part of Central America. The Indian is an excellent hunter; the keenness of his senses is marvelous and nothing escapes his eyes. Every sound is noticed and understood, and the distance and the direction whence any noise proceeds is estimated with surprising accuracy. The Indian has a marvelous instinct which permits him to discover with great ease the footprints of animals and then determine the species to which they belong. He pursues the game through the thicket with the sagacity of the bloodhound.

A MALE OCCUPATION.—The wife never accompanies her husband on the actual hunt, where she would be in his way, for she does not learn to handle any arms. When a number of men organize a hunting party, expected to last more than a day, they may be accompanied by the members of their family. Arrived at a place said to be rich in game, they erect temporary sheds, wherefrom they undertake smaller expeditions in different directions. The hunters start out early in the morning, and before nightfall they rejoin the women and children, who have been left behind at the provisional ranch. The best time for hunting is in the morning before 9 o'clock and in the evening after

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Camock, a member of that Puritan colony, appears to have founded a settlement at Cabo Gracias a Dios. Having gained the confidence of the Indians, the son of one of their most important chiefs was taken to England, where he remained two years, a certain Colonel Morris remaining as hostage among the Indians. Some of these Indians went occasionally to Providencia, where they learned English and were instructed in the Christian religion (Sloan, a: pp. LXXVI–LXXVII; Bridges: II, 138–139). In 1641 this Puritan colony, which by that time had found it more profitable to take up privateering than to pursue the peaceable occupation of farming, was stamped out by a Spanish expedition; the settlers then left for other regions, chiefly to the Bahama Islands.

According to Exquemelin (French edit.: II, 277), who wrote in 1678, the first buccaneers, a French vessel, anchored at Cabo Gracias a Dios 60 years previously—that is, about 1618—and entered into friendly relations with the Indians; the buccaneers would seem, therefore, to have been the first Europeans with whom the Miskito became friendly.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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224 4 o'clock; that is when the animals and birds are feeding. During the remainder of the day the forest is quiet, and most of the birds roost in the dense treetops.

487 224 TRAVEL TO THE HUNTING GROUND.—Travel is effected chiefly by small pitpans, for the Indians are canoe men by necessity, the rivers being their roads. They leave their boat at a certain spot, the parting point of a trail leading to a good hunting ground, that is, a region abundant in fruit trees. To a stranger such hunting trails are barely perceptible; here and there marks on trees made with the machete and broken twigs indicate the direction. The Indians always travel in single file, even when there is a broad road, or when they traverse open country. In marching they always glance at the sun and they observe the direction the clouds are moving, that is from northeast to southwest on the Mosquito Coast. Intuitively they keep in their mind a mental picture of the direction they came from. They walk along, silent and watchful, and at times stand still to listen.

224 STALKING.—The Indian is an expert stalker, but not a true sportsman; he rarely shoots at the game while it is in motion, except in the midst of a flock of flying birds. He therefore rarely misses the mark, but is not necessarily a good marksman. Owing to his scarce clothing he moves about the forest without making any noise. His color also appears to a certain degree to assimilate with the forest.

IMITATING THE CALL OF THE GAME.—The Indian huntsman imitates the call of animals and birds, in order to call them within arrow or gun shot. Bone whistles (M.: *kyaki wasbaya;* S.: *malka kuñ*) are used to lure the agouti (*Dasyprocta* sp.) under certain trees at the time when the latter drop their fruits. This trick is especially successful during the pairing season of certain animals. The Indian is thoroughly acquainted with the habits of the game.

HUNTING DOGS.—A lot of skinny, mangy dogs, esteemed for their skill in stirring up the game, are found in the Indian villages. With the aid of large dogs trained for the purpose, the jaguar is cornered and the puma is driven up a tree, where it may easily be shot by the hunter. When the Indian ascends a stream he keeps close to the river bank and lets his dog range the woods. The latter, upon scaring up some game, will give tongue immediately and endeavor to drive it to the water. This is the common way of hunting the paca which lives at the river bank and plunges into the water when pursued. This rodent also enters hollow trees and burrows in the ground and is then difficult to secure. Its meat is delicious and is appreciated by the average foreigner.

224 824 Before leaving for the chase the dog's snout is rubbed with certain herbs, so that the game shall not be able to smell it. This procedure is also supposed to clear the scent of the dog and sharpen his perceptions. An infusion from a small parasitic plant, called in Spanish

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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"lengua de venado" (deer's tongue), is administered by the Sumu to the hunting dogs when they wish to get a deer.

HUNTING WEAPONS.—Muzzle-loading shotguns (M.: *raks*, *rakbus*; S.: *arakbus*, *arakbas*) are now used on the chase by all the Miskito, but bow and arrow (see Hunting and Fighting Implements) are still employed by the Sumu for that purpose. The arrow is not discharged at an object more than 75 feet away, but it has the advantage of not scaring the other game in the neighborhood, as does the discharge of a gun. Upon meeting a drove of peccaries, the hunters surround it, and each one of them will attempt to shoot several arrows before the scared game have found an outlet to escape. Three or four arrows are generally taken along by each man, as the wild cane shaft generally breaks during the struggle of the wounded animal; the larger game may even break the hardwood foreshaft or the iron head of the arrow.

Snares, traps, and slings are seldom used to-day. The Kukra are said to have been expert in capturing big game by making a deep hole in the neighborhood of fruit trees. It was carefully camouflaged with the aid of branches and leaves, and a small trail was cut to lead the victims to it.

DEER.—Nocturnal animals, especially the two small species of deer found in the country (*Odocoileus* sp. and *Mazama* sp.), are hunted occasionally with the aid of torches. Toward the close of the dry season the savanna is also fired and drives are organized to hunt deer or other animals, which are driven in a corner, where they are easily secured. Deer, agouti, and birds are the chief game found in the savannas and along the coast.

PECCARY.—The white-lipped peccary (*Tayassu* sp.) is highly esteemed as meat; it travels in large droves, which may be heard from some distance. Occasionally it charges the hunter and forces him up a tree; some bushmen claim, however, that all one needs to do in such circumstance is to step behind a large tree, whereupon the animals keep on rushing forward without attempting to turn. The smaller collared peccary (*Pecari angulatus*) has a dorsal gland which Europeans regarded as the navel in former days; this gland has to be cut off immediately after death, otherwise the flesh can hardly be eaten. The weight of these beasts may range from 50 to 100 pounds. The peccaries, like most of the other edible animals, are supposed to have an owner, who keeps them shut up at times, and does not release them unless the sukya practices certain rites of incantation and makes a small offering.

OTHER MAMMALS.—Among the other game animals the most esteemed are two species of monkey, the spider monkey (*Ateles* sp.) and the capuchin monkey (*Cebus* sp.). The tapir (*Tapirella bairdii* syn. *Elasmognathus bairdii*) is considered a special delicacy in certain regions of the Mosquito Coast; in other districts its flesh is said to be

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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coarse and unhealthy and even is taboo. The Miskito call it *tilba*, which name is already mentioned at the end of the seventeenth century in the form *tilbu* (M. W.: 311).

LIZARDS.—The largest lizard is the green iguana (*Iguana tuberculata*) which is generally shot while feeding on the river banks or in the branches of some overhanging tree. Sometimes it tries to escape by dashing into the water, where the Indians attempt to catch it by diving after it. It is sometimes kept alive by the Indians until required for food. For this purpose they break the thighs and arm-bones, and put the backbone out of joint; or else they twist the legs and tie the front ones over the back and the hind ones over the tail by their own sinews. The poor animal is thus unable to run away. The eggs of the iguana are also highly esteemed.

BIRDS.—Various species of guans (*Penelope*, *Ortalis*, *Pipile* [46]), the yellow-crested black curassows (*Crax* sp.), mountain hens (*Tinamus* sp.), quails (*Ortyx* sp.), partridges (*Odontophorus* sp.), pigeons (*Columba* sp.), and wild ducks (*Cairina moschata*) are esteemed as game birds.

RETURN FROM THE CHASE.—After the chase the game is carried on the back to the canoe. When a large animal, as a peccary, has been killed each fore and hind foot are tied together with the aid of withes. The Indian, putting his arms through the loops thus formed, with the beast's head downward, carries it on the back, as if shouldering a knapsack. A strap passing over the forehead may also be attached to help support the load. If the hunters are unable to carry all the game at one time the remainder is hung on the branches of some tree, to keep it out of reach of prowling animals.

Arrived at his settlement, the Indian merely takes his arms and paddle and walks home, sending his wife down to the waterside to fetch the game. The hair of the latter is then singed by a fire made in the open. The neighbors, who are generally near relatives, receive a share of the meat.

Then a big pot is put on the fire, for the Indians do not think of the morrow and, if possible, consume all the meat at once. The women and children do not have patience enough to wait until it is cooked, but they cut off small slices, which they roast over the hot coals and eat, with a few bananas or plantains. If they are unable to dispose of all the supply on the first day the remainder is barbecued without salt over a slow fire. (See Culinary Arts.)

HUNTING CHARMS.—Many charms are used for luck in hunting. Stones or pebbles, found in the stomach of certain animals, are

[46] The large guan (*Penelope* sp.) is called *kwamu* by the Miskito, a name found already by M. W. (311) in the form *quaumoes*.

1: Conzemius M-4, 5 (1921) 1932
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supposed to attract the same species and entice it within gunshot.* The bones, teeth, and skulls of animals killed in the chase are said to have the same power. This explains the presence of animal jawbones, deer skulls, jaguar teeth, and plumes and beaks of birds in every hut. But they are not only preserved as charms but also as trophies, of which the owner is very proud; he will always take pleasure in relating the circumstances under which he killed the game in question, and that in the most exaggerated and animated fashion. Certain objects are also worn as talismans to prevent being harmed by the spirit of the animal killed.

WARFARE

WARRIORS HELD IN GREAT ESTEEM.—These primitive people were very warlike by nature in former days and all men were soldiers in case of conflict. Honors depended largely upon success in war. We know that among the Miskito brave warriors were held in great esteem. They were called *taplu* or *tahplu*, a word reminding of the term *tapaligui*, which was applied, according to Oviedo, among the Nicarao, Chorotega and Chontales to men who had won a hand-to-hand fight in sight of the armies; they were rewarded for their bravery by admission to various warrior classes.

MILITARY TRAINING.—The bow and arrow used to be the principal weapon of both tribes under consideration. (See Hunting and Fighting Implements.) From early childhood on the Miskito boys practiced with toy weapons made for them by their fathers. They were able to strike off arrows shot at them, with the aid of a small stick not bigger than the rod of a fowling piece, provided only one was thrown at a time (Dampier: I, 8).

Up to about 50 years ago the Sumu organized from time to time great festivals, called *asañ lāūwana*, in order to undergo some sort of military training and take the necessary steps to defend their territory against the invasions of the Miskito or the Spaniards. They took place in some secluded part of the forest, where no stranger was liable to intrude, but all the Sumu men from far away made it a point of honor to be present. The women were, however, never admitted, as they were always connected with ceremonial impurity; they remained at an adjoining hut and there prepared the food which was carried to the festival by a number of young boys.

* There is a story current among the Sumu about a spotted variety of deer which is extremely rare. If the animal sees the hunter first, the latter will not be able to get it, as none of the shots fired at it will hit. If, on the other hand, he sees the deer first and is able to wound it mortally, the dying animal will vomit a stone; the possession of the latter will enable the hunter to kill many deer in the future. A similar virtue is ascribed by the Ladinos to the green Amazon stones or "piedras hijadas" (*Lapis nephriticus*).

2: Kirchhoff E-4 (no date) 1948
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Maize is believed to be unimportant except in the higher lands, e.g., among the *Ulua*. The *Jicaque* grow it as a commercial crop but do not use it extensively as food. Pineapples are important to the *Paya*. Chili peppers and opuntia, the latter used for raising cochineal, a dye-producing insect, appear to be recent introductions. Plants introduced by the Europeans vary in importance, but plantain is now one of the most basic foods of the region. Quantities of wild foods of all kinds form an important part of the diet.

Hunting.—The bow and arrow was once important to many tribes but has been partially or wholly replaced by the gun. The bow has not been reported from the Corn Islands. Spears or javelins were formerly used for hunting. Slings, traps, and snares were used prinicipally for birds. For the blowgun, see page 224.

LIST OF FOODS GROWN BY THE PEOPLE IN THE CARIBBEAN LOWLANDS:

AMERICAN ORIGIN:

Sweet manioc.
Bitter manioc.
Maize.
Pejivalle (pejibaye) palm.
Sweetpotato.
Eddoe (tania).
Gourd.
Pumpkin.
Squash.
Chayote.
Tomato.
Bean (red and black).
Pineapple.
Tobacco.
Cotton.
Achiote (*Bixa orellana*).
Cacao.
Pataste.
Papaya.
Avocado.
Guava.
Chirimoya.
Zapote.
Coconut.
Usi.
Ficus.
Yam.
Opuntia.
Peanuts.

FOREIGN ORIGIN:

Rice.
Sugarcane.
Coffee.
Mango.
Breadfruit.
Tamarind.
Citrus fruits.
Plantain.
Banana.

Hunting is exclusively a male occupation. Communal hunts lasting several days and hunting by torchlight have been reported. Dogs are used frequently to chase the game. Hunters may imitate the calls of animals, sometimes using bone whistles.

Fishing.—Women fish with hooks, which were originally made of bone. Men fish in groups of varying sizes. Fish are shot with the bow and arrow, speared with single- or multipronged spears, taken with traps of various types, or frightened so that they jump into canoes. Torches are used at night to attract the fish. Fish are poisoned by parties of men. Women and men whose wives are pregnant or menstruating cannot join such expeditions (*Jicaque*). Rotenone-bearing plants are crushed in the water above a weir from which the stupefied fish are removed.

3: Pijoan D-5 (ca. 1945) 1946
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MEAT FOODS

226 A very large share of food is obtained from the sea, the lagoons, and the rivers. Larger fish are caught by throwing a spear or javelin, smaller ones with hooks or nets. Previous to the introduction of steel, the Indians fashioned their spear heads from bamboo, which was easily cut into barbs. A cord is attached to the point whereas the shaft is a solid light wood. With this device they spear the carp-like snook and the tarpon. At night fish are attracted by the use of a pitch pine torch and are also speared; turtles are harpooned. Fish are sometimes caught by "poisoning" the water. For this purpose the Indians utilize several vines; usually one which has been identified as *Seriania inebrians*. The vine is crushed with flat stones to release the poisonous milky juice. A creek is temporarily dammed and at some distance above the dam the crushed plant is thrown into de water, the fish are quickly paralysed and are then caught by the Indians. Large fish are easily harpooned when in this condition. Smaller fish are allowed to float away and recover when they reach unpolluted water. Bows and arrows are rarely used today for fishing purposes but near mining centers fish are often dynamited; this process is to be condemned since it destroys the majority of the smaller fish.

[225] The tails of young alligators and crocodiles are occasionally eaten. Lobsters, crabs, and mollusks form an important item of food. In general, the rivers and lagoons afford an ever present, easily obtainable source of food.

224 With muzzle loading and other equally out-of-date shotguns, the Indians hunt game. Spears, bows, and arrows are occasionally used but the blowgun is no longer used. Game is found in abundance along the margins of the rivers. Deer, Peccary, spider monkey and capuchin monkey, tapir, lizards and a variety of birds, including parrots, red-spoonbills, curasows, mountain hens, quail, partridge, pigeons and a number of wild ducks, are used for food. In addition to the wild game, the Indians raise and eat some domestic cattle, pigs and chikens. There is no lack of meat of one form of another. It is often preserved by drying and smoking it for several days over a dull fire, since the humidity is too high for sun drying. Salt is used sparingly by the Indians.

FOOD PREPARATION AND CONSUMPTION

373 Fire is a necessity for cooking, for without it the Indians would have to subsist on raw foods. Fire is produced by twirling a hardwood stick in a notch of wild cane. When smoke appears a piece of wild